

4 April 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE ACTING DIRECTOR

**SUBJECT: NIE 11-69: Trends in Soviet Military Capabilities
in the Period 1965-1975**

1. NIE 11-69 was laid on in response to an Air Force request for a ten-year estimate of Soviet military strengths. The paper has passed through its first stages of coordination with USIB representatives, and can probably be submitted to USIB for approval on 12 April, though some checking of details remains to be done with OMAIC, JASIC, and the SIC, and cleanup sessions with the USIB representatives are still to be held.
2. The Board doubts that this paper as it now stands does much to satisfy the Air Force requirement. For example, an important part of the original request was for tables of Soviet military strengths estimated through ten years. The Board and the agency representatives believe that intelligence does not justify such precise estimates so far in advance. The Air Force representative is not pressing the matter, and he has not

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indicated that the paper is unsatisfactory in scope. Nevertheless, both he and the representatives of other agencies have become increasingly dubious about the paper's merits, as paragraph-by-paragraph discussion proceeded.

3. The Board, for its part, does not believe that the paper as it now stands is useful. Part I, for example, is largely devoted to an exposition of how complex and unpredictable the factors are which will influence Soviet military decisions five to ten years hence -- a point which scarcely requires much argument to establish. The numerous reservations taken by the Air Force representative in this Part are virtually all on familiar issues; they have come up in NIE 11-4 or NIE 11-5, and some of them have led to footnotes of dissent. Part II, which is an attempt at surveying the possibilities in various lines of weapons development, and is based on GMAIC, JAIC, and SIC contributions, has become very thin indeed after going through the coordination process.

4. It would not be unprecedented to issue an estimate which the intelligence community considered below the desired standard. Because of the inherent interest and importance of

this particular subject, however, and the expectations which an NIE on it are likely to arouse among consumers, the Board feels that extra consideration should be given as to the advisability of proceeding further. It would be worth while to do so before asking COMAIC and the other scientific committees to put in further work on some of the details.

9. Accordingly, we are asking for a brief discussion of the paper at this week's NSIB meeting. We are not recommending that it be withdrawn; the Director indicated that he would prefer us not to make such a recommendation. Moreover, we cannot say certainly that it fails to fulfill some useful purpose for the Air Force and perhaps other military agencies. We believe, however, that if the military agencies do not find the paper useful it had better be withdrawn than issued in a form which is almost certain to disappoint most consumers.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:

SHERMAN KENT
Assistant Director
National Estimates